



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
9922 Front St. (Hwy M-72)
Empire, Michigan 49630-9797

IN REPLY REFER TO:

May 5, 2005

L7617(SLBE)

Dear Park Stakeholder:

After a long and complex process, the National Park Service (NPS) has selected the No-Action Alternative for The Homestead Wastewater Disposal Environmental Assessment within Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. This alternative represents what would likely occur if The Homestead's Irrigation Management Plan (IMP) for the existing easement were approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Based on an opinion issued by the Department of the Interior Solicitor's Office, the National Park Service (NPS) has determined that The Homestead has the legal right to continue with spray irrigation on the easement, subject to MDEQ permit approval, and that the 100-foot setback does not apply to the easement boundary. It should also be noted that the spray effluent application must be confined to the easement lands.

The relative advantages and disadvantages of the three alternatives were identified and analyzed by reviewing the EA and public comments. NPS concerns with potential impacts resulting from implementation of either of the two action alternatives (Alternatives 1 and 2) were weighed against those of clearing and grading 8.3 acres of mature forest and semi-open land (on easement Parcel B) and developing the proposed spray irrigation system. For the action alternatives, the NPS was concerned about unknowns relating to the ability to achieve successful long-term restoration of the Thoreson cultural landscape in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District, long-term wastewater maintenance and monitoring activities, and the ability to maintain the aesthetics that are appreciated by many visitors. The NPS was also concerned that the effects of anticipated increased nitrogen levels in the shallow nearshore environment in Lake Michigan are not fully understood. While the MDEQ and other specialists recognize Lake Michigan as a "nitrogen sink," the NPS was concerned about this particular community (shallow water with rocky bottom), and the recent stresses placed on Lake Michigan from zebra mussels and other exotic organisms. Potential impacts to adjacent private drinking water wells was a concern for Alternative 2. Impacts of activities likely to occur under the No-Action alternative are also of concern to the NPS, including the long-term loss of mature forest and short-term erosion/sedimentation on park lands. Also, another concern is the drifting of wastewater effluent from the sprayed parcels onto park lands and the associated safety hazards for park visitors. In summary, the NPS was concerned that the affected resources for the action alternatives (Lake Michigan water quality and the viewshed of the Thoreson farm landscape) are more significant than the affected resources for the No-Action alternative (8.3 acres of mixed native and non-native forest and semi-open land).

Based on a comparative analysis of these impact concerns, the No-Action alternative was selected as the NPS Preferred Alternative. The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed by the acting NPS Midwest Regional Director on April 28, 2005. The signing of the FONSI signifies the end of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for this project.

The FONSI, a Question & Answer document, and an EA Errata Sheet and Map have been placed on our park website (www.nps.gov/slbe) for public review. Written copies of these documents are available upon request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dusty Shultz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dusty Shultz
Superintendent